

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Social Work Department Social Work Services for People with Mental Health Problems

Social Work is organised in three area teams, two in Lewis and Harris and one in Uist and Barra.

The Social Work Department has an open referral system. People do not have to meet any specific criteria to be referred for an assessment of need.

The Duty Social Worker in each office takes initial details of the referral which is then allocated for assessment to a Mental Health Officer or Social Worker from the appropriate area team. The Mental Health Officer or Social Worker will, as soon as practicable, make contact with the person referred to commence the assessment.

The assessment interviews usually take place in the person's own home but can take place at the Social Work Department or any other appropriate location of the person's own choice.

The person who has been referred will as far as possible be involved in the assessment and all the information recorded as part of the assessment will be shared with them.

If the person is involved with other agencies the Social Work Department, with their permission, will seek information from these agencies.

The main areas covered in this assessment are current circumstances, home situation, health, family supports, social contacts, relationships, the person's own views and wishes. The aim of the assessment is to gather as much information as possible in order to plan and provide appropriate services for an individual.

Accessing services in an emergency

During office hours (9am-5pm Monday to Friday), contact the duty social worker at the appropriate Area Office: Social Work Department, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Tel: (01851) 703773.

The duty social worker will take details of the emergency and ensure that appropriate action is taken by relevant social work staff.

If the emergency occurs outwith office hours, emergency duty social workers can be contacted on the following numbers:

FAIRE

Tel: 01851 701702

If difficulties are encountered in making contact with the emergency duty social worker on either of these numbers contact can be made through the police station in Stornoway

Tel: (01851) 702222

where the desk sergeant will assist in locating social work staff.

Casework

Most of the social workers in the Western Isles carry a generic caseload. Consequently most work with people who have mental health problems. It is acknowledged that mental health problems are often significant factors in situations where the main focus of work is elsewhere, e.g. child care and criminal justice work.

The role of the social worker is primarily to assist people in managing difficult and stressful periods in their lives by enhancing as far as possible the person's own ability to cope with and resolve their difficulties and access appropriate services.

This process involves assessment and identification of the main areas of difficulty followed by the formulation of a care plan which may include the involvement of other professionals or voluntary agencies.

The Social Work Department provides practical support to people as well as providing individual and family counselling.

Mental Health Officers

There are six Mental Health Officers in the Western Isles.

Mental Health Officers are specialist mental health social workers having undergone specific training in mental health and the relevant Acts within which they operate. MHOs have to demonstrate their competence to their Local Authority on an annual basis.

They are employed by the Local Authority and approved by that Authority to carry out duties as stipulated within the Adults With Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995, as amended by the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003.

The role of the Mental Health Officer within the M.H. (C. & T.) (S) Act 2003, includes considering and exploring the circumstances of an individual who has been referred in order to confirm whether or not it is necessary to admit the individual to hospital for treatment. The Mental Health Officer has a responsibility to consider means other than admission to hospital by which the health and safety of the individual can be secured.

Other Mental Health Officer duties include preparing reports for the Sheriff to consider in Court under the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, regarding adults who lack capacity, where another person has applied for welfare guardianship i.e. the authority to act on their behalf. The MHO must give a view on the suitability of the applicant. Where there is no other person to apply for this authority, the Local Authority has a duty, where incapacity has been established, to make the application, citing the Chief Social Work Officer as the guardian.

Within part V1 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 as amended by the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, the Mental Health Officer has a variety of duties including preparing Social Circumstances Reports, participating in statutory reviews and taking on the role of 'designated' MHO for mentally disordered offenders.

Diversion of offenders

A scheme to divert certain offenders from prosecution is operating in the Western Isles. The existence of mental health problems may predispose the Procurator Fiscal to consider the possibility of diverting a case from prosecution. In such circumstances a referral would be made to the Social Work Department for assessment by an area team social worker. If the individual was considered appropriate for inclusion in the Diversion Scheme, he/she would then receive the necessary support, either from the social worker or through referral on to the psychiatric services.

Residential Provision

The Dementia Unit in Dun Eisdèan, Stornoway has ten long-stay beds and 2 respite care beds. The other local authority residential units for older people also support some people with dementia.

Ardseileach provides a residential home for 11 people with learning disabilities who may also have mental health problems.

Day Care

Craigard Day Centre, Lochmaddy, North Uist provides eight places, two days per week for a mixed group of people, including people who have mental health problems.

Bragar Day Centre in Lewis provides support for people with mental health problems.

Grianan Resource Centre, Stornoway, Lewis provides day care facilities for people with mental health problems.

Barra Day Service in Castlebay provides 8 places, 2 days per week for people with learning disability who may also have mental health problems.

Ardseileach Centre, Stornoway, provides 30 places for people with learning disabilities some of whom may have mental health problems.

Domiciliary Support

Support is provided to people with mental health problems in their own home through home carers who assist with domestic management, budgeting, cooking and the general development and maintenance of independent living skills.

As far as possible carers are identified with specific skills for this work. Support can be provided throughout the day and at evenings and weekends.

Ardseileach (residential) provides domiciliary support to 9 people living in their own homes in Stornoway with learning disability who may also have mental health problems.

Other services

The occupational therapy service provides aids and adaptations for people living in the community. Financial assistance can be given with the installation of a telephone or other aids to assist those who are socially isolated or otherwise at risk.

Financial Arrangements

Home Care Service

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar ensures all home care services are provided free to: -

1. Individuals whose assessed weekly income is £142 or less and who have savings of less than £10,000
2. Couples whose assessed weekly income is £212 or less and who have savings of less than £16,000. For those above those levels, some services still have to be paid for, varying with your income and savings.

Further details of the financial arrangements for the Home Care Service and also Day Care Services, Residential Services, and Long Term Care are available from the following telephone number - 01851 703773 (Social Work Department).

Information for Service Users

Health Information (HI)

Marissa MacLennan, Project Coordinator,
c/o Health Promotion Department,
Health Centre,
Springfield Road,
Stornoway
HS1 2PS.
Tel. 01851 701545

Type of Service Provided:

The HI Project is the first of its kind in Scotland, utilising the in touch with Health system and aimed at providing an alternative route to accredited information for those living and working in the Western Isles.

The Project provides easy access to a wide range of health information including medical conditions, surgical procedures, check-ups and screenings, travel health, local and national support groups and websites. All information is easily understandable and produced by practicing doctors and pharmacists in a variety of languages.

The information is targeted at national and local priority groups and is aimed at providing accurate and appropriate health information to NHS services users and their carers, addressing the requirements of the Patient and Public Involvement Initiative.